

Coins

Miss Liberty to become 'Ms. Lib' on \$1 coin

By Roger Boye

WHEN THE TREASURY Department proposed earlier this year to mint a small dollar coin, the Goddess of Liberty seemed like the logical choice for the coin's front-side design.

The department administrators knew, of course, that Miss Liberty has been part of many United States coin designs, and they thought that on the new dollar she would be symbolic of and honor all women, rather than just one individual.

But the Treasury chiefs did not realize that Miss Liberty has worn out her welcome with several members of Congress who believe that Americans no longer can relate to mythological figures. As Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D., Colo.) told a congressional subcommittee on May 31, placing Miss Liberty on a coin to represent women is as absurd as placing Father Time, Uncle Sam, or Neptune on a coin to represent men.

The leading alternative candidate is Susan B. Anthony, the women's rights advocate who died in 1906. Approximately 25 congressmen are cosponsoring a bill introduced by Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D., Ohio) to put Anthony's image on the proposed dollar coin, and a similar bill in the Senate has five cosponsors.

Oakar says the Miss Liberty design suggested by the Bureau of the Mint is "ill-conceived (and) a second-rate artistic portrait." She correctly points out that other than the symbolic Liberty,

no woman has ever appeared on a United States coin and she believes it is high time the oversight was corrected.

Oakar also testified at the May 31 hearings of the House Subcommittee on Historic Preservation and Coinage. The testimony by the two congresswomen and others was so forcefully presented that committee chairman, Walter Fauntroy (D., D.C.), promised that the committee "would reconsider the (design) recommendations of the Treasury" and take action on proposed legislation "very shortly."

The subcommittee's action is critical because most congressmen don't care whose portrait is placed on the coin and would simply rubber-stamp whatever design recommendation is made by the House Banking Committee and its coinage subcommittee, a key congressional aide said. If the subcommittee cannot agree on one woman, Miss Liberty might become the compromise choice, another aide added.

The Senate Banking Committee is expected to conduct hearings in July on the bill introduced in the Senate by committee chairman Sen. William Proxmire (D., Wis.) to mint a small-sized dollar coin with Anthony's portrait. Staff members of both committees hope that both houses of Congress will have voted on the proposed legislation before the end of the year.

Several women's groups support the Anthony proposal, although some individuals prefer other women for the coin. Mint director Stella Hackel says more than 50 who have been recommended



Proposed Liberty design for small size dollar coin (center top and bottom) shown with current half-dollar and quarter.

for the coin, including Helen Keller, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Rep. James Leach (R., Iowa) has introduced a bill to place on the coin the portraits of Anthony and Harriet Tubman, a black who campaigned for women's rights. He told the House subcommittee on May 31 that his bill was a "fair solution" to the question of which woman to put on the coin.

However, Leach's bill was criticized at the hearing by Alan Goldman, an assistant director of the Mint, who said that with two portraits, consumers might believe the coins are commemorative pieces and simply "stick them in a drawer."

The president of the National Organization for Women, Inc., Eleanor Cutri Smeal, also doesn't care for the Leach bill. She told the committee that people might get the impression two women are needed on the dollar coin to be the equal of one man on coins of other denominations.

Oakar, who also is a subcommittee member, said black Americans should be honored individually on coins, and added that she hopes Anthony will be just one of many women to appear on future coins.

Meanwhile, engravers at the Mint have begun working on a portrait of Anthony, just in case Congress nixes their Miss Liberty design proposal.